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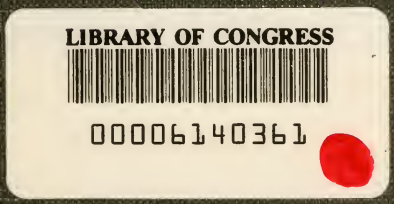

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[Published by ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH, 683 Broadway, New York.]

UNCONDITIONAL LOYALTY.

BY H. W. BELLOWS, D.D.

"And the Government shall be upon his shoulder."—Isaiah ix. 6.

This is a part of the famous passage which sacred literature and the half-inspired music of Handel have rendered so familiar in its application to the mission of the Messiah. Inseparable as it has now become from Christ's person, its original reference, singular as the language may appear in such a connection, was to an earthly monarch. Isaiah was predicting a king for Israel, who should be competent to free it from all its political and moral perplexities, and he described him in words not then esteemed extravagant or sacrilegious, whatever might be thought of them now. "For unto us a child is born; unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, *to order it*, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever."

It is instructive to bear in mind that this passage is, on Scriptural authority, applicable to human governors and to our Divine Master; that the head of the Church and the head of the State, if not united in the same person, are spoken of in these solemn terms of dignity and responsiblenesss, as if their duties had a similar significance, and their claims a similar, though not equal, importance. It is not, therefore, without reason that nations have used the most hallowed religious sanctions and symbols in consecrating rulers; that they have ascribed a religious sanctity to a King's office, and employed phrases which, if literally untrue, were yet profoundly suggestive in de-

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scribing the King as "reigning by divine right," and incapable of doing wrong. We boast ourselves of having got beyond these political superstitions; but if we have got beyond the profound truths they rudely covered, we have passed out of the sphere of safety, and lost the anchorage of all civil security. The head of a nation *is* a sacred person, representing, for the time he holds his office, the most valuable and solemn rights and duties of a people. "The Government" is "upon his shoulder"—and the Government is the mighty pillar that fastens in order and holds to safety the ten thousand varying interests, rights and obligations of a nation. File at the staple which God fastens to his own throne, in the oaths of office which make a man chief ruler of a people, and you loosen thoughtlessly every link in that chain of law and order, which binds society together. There is something in the Chief Magistrate of a people, infinitely more important than his personal qualities, his judgment, his intelligence, his rectitude. It is *his office*—his representative character as the National Head. He can truly say with Louis XIV., "The State—it is I. Dishonor me, and you disgrace the nation! Weaken me, and you undermine the country! Speak or think lightly of my oath, my office, my place, and you cheapen yourselves, your institutions, your hopes and prospects." I know the attempted refinements with which a licentious Press, or a thoughtless public, attempt to evade their duty by distinguishing between the man and his office, despising and abusing the one, while affecting to honor and respect the other. But practically—in times of revolution or war especially—there can be no distinction. The office is so much larger than the man, that any abuse directed at him, hits it in spite of the marksman. You cannot rudely assail the personal character or judgment of a Chief Magistrate without weakening public respect for the office he holds. This fact makes it of the utmost importance to select rulers whose characters and qualifications do not invite disrespect. But however carelessly nominated, once elected, they ought to be thenceforth free from the tongue of light criticism or coarse abuse, for their office-sake. I sincerely believe that the free-and-easy tongue of our people in discussing the personal character and claims of our Chief Magistrates, while in office, during the last twenty years, has contributed greatly to the demoralization of the nation, has cheapened the standard of qualifications for the Presidency, has lowered and loosened the office itself, and is, at this time,

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perhaps, the chief danger in our public affairs. If, at this moment, we all felt as we ought to feel, that the authority of the President of the United States was a sufficient rallying cry; that he fully represented both the expressed or constitutional and the reserved rights of the people; that his oath of office was solemnly binding, not only on him, but also on us for whom he took it; that his will, in a time of civil war and universal public danger, was a will having an official right to our reverence and obedience, we should escape the only utterly irremediable danger by which we are threatened. To rally round the President—without question or dispute—is the first and most sacred duty of loyal citizens, when he announces, not that the Constitution merely, but that the National life and existence are in peril. He is the official judge of this—and if we do not accept his testimony, we have nothing to trust to. Remember that his opinions are not personal but official; not matters of individual judgment, or taste, or party; but resultants of the knowledge and counsel and wisdom of his constitutional advisers. That he speaks as the Government, and for the Government, with all the wisdom and capacity the Government has; that this Government *is the only Government we have, or can have, while the present tenure of office holds out;* and that, however much wiser its successor may be, that will not help us now. The ship of state is held for two years more solely by this anchor. It may go to wreck and ruin if that anchor parts, even though a better one be forging for the next term of office. To waste this sacred season, when the nation is in a struggle of life and death, and the Government is the physician alone responsible for applying the remedies for its recovery—with no possibility of calling in any other until too late—in abusing the competency, or weakening the authority and the means of restoration in the hands of the attending surgeon, is the height of thoughtless folly and the source of infinite danger.

Do not mistake me as undertaking the defence of our present Administration on any party or personal grounds. I am only pleading the sacred cause of Government itself. I regard all party predilections and schemes, at a moment like this, with unutterable sorrow and indignation. The country should have but one thought—the protection of the National life, and the upholding of the constituted authorities, who alone can legitimately wield the power and resources of the nation, to effect our salvation. It is not the policy, but the STRENGTH of the Government that is to save us; nor is it now this General or

that, this measure or that, this Cabinet officer or that—who either blocks our way or has power to open it. Our great difficulty is the reluctance of the people to trust the Government with all the moral and political powers it requires, in order to wield the whole force of the nation in defence of its life. I do not wonder at this hesitation; but it is nearly fatal. The people have been so long accustomed to look after their private rights, their personal liberties, their local interests, and have—in a time of peace—acquainted themselves so little with the advantages derived from the National Government—though it has unconsciously all the while been showering blessings on their regardless heads—that they continue in a time of civil war—when a desperate enemy is stabbing at the heart of the nation, the capital, and clutching at the nation's throat, the Mississippi river, and while all the great empires of the world are in ill-concealed sympathy with this domestic foe—discussing questions of sectional and local importance—watching tariffs and bank charters—fighting over petty offices, scowling on necessary measures for incarcerating and arresting traitors, denying a proper legality to the suspension of *habeas corpus*—and threatening to resist any law of conscription, necessary to secure the military force required to make good the place of our retiring levies. At this present hour the President of the United States could not leave the District of Columbia without being liable to arrest and imprisonment in a common jail. And for what? for shutting up in Lafayette, or Fort Henry, men who, before they went there, were spies of the enemy, and more dangerous each of them than a whole regiment in the field, and who, the moment any clemency visits them, renew their old business and sow dissension and despair at home, and create hope and courage in Richmond! And all this is simply because the honest people of the United States do not yet feel that all the State Governments and all the city and town Governments owe whatever is protecting and beneficent in them, to the overshadowing power and greatness of the Federal or National Government; that terror and suffering does not yet reach them, only because the Federal Government stands bleeding, but strong and resolute, between them and harm; that it is now fighting their battles, protecting their honor and prosperity; doing, suffering, and daring all things for their sake! The people seem to think the President's, or the Government's strength may be impaired and they continue strong; that their local, State, or sectional prosperity, and law and order, here and anywhere,

have no vital and necessary connection with the vigor and honor and power of the Federal authority. Alas! what a terrible, and possibly what a fatal mistake! Do you suppose that any body disloyal to the General Government is a friend to his own State? Are you are not seeing what that view of local rights, which makes the States jealous enemies of the National Government, has brought upon the Southern members of this Union? Have they not all, from being only angry watch-dogs and worriers of the General Government, become open traitors to it? And how far from similar traitors are those who stand now, criticising, sneering at and resisting as far as they dare, every act of the Federal authorities which looks to vigorous defence of National sovereignty—every measure that puts a thinly-disguised traitor or secessionist under arrest, or seeks to disembarrass the hands of the Government, full of immense responsibilities and cares, from the capering interference of local authorities?

These—not the skill and prowess of the enemy, not foreign intervention, not the want of good Generals or good statesmen—are our real perils,—the divisions, the local interference, the partisan jealousies which prevent our whole people from uniting as one man in upholding the Government. The Government has men; has, or can have, money; has clear and recognized duties; has, I believe, confidence in its own policy, and power and ability to conquer the enemy; has none of the despondency and despair about military or naval proceedings—none of the internal strifes and divisions which afflict the people. What then does it want? Nothing but the full consent and approbation of the people—nothing but the united loyalty and confidence of the people, trusting it with all the necessary discretion to carry into execution what it judges to be essential to the very preservation of the National life. These discretionary powers Congress is slow to endorse, and not blamably, because Congress studies and must study the people, their moods, wishes and prejudices, and these moods I do not so much condemn as lament. Why, after twenty months, is no act legalizing the suspension of *habeas corpus* yet passed? I know it is not essential in a legal view, but how necessary for a moral effect. Why have the elections everywhere indicated a desire to invigorate State Governments and private securities and personal rights at such an untimely hour? Why have thoughtless demagogues or selfish politicians seized this moment, when Federal and National interests should rule supreme, to play upon the people's honest prejudices, by alarming them at the

alleged inroads on their local and personal liberties? As if the man that broke down his neighbor's fence to procure a rail to fling to his neighbor's own child struggling in the water, was to be called to account for trespass while the boy was drowning! Yet this is the precise spirit of local and sectional politicians, seeking to make their political fortunes out of the National distress, as many wretched traders are doing out of the National treasury. It is not one party, or another that is doing this, but many in all. Thousands who helped to put the President in office, are among these local and un-national destroyers of the country's life—assailing the Government they made, because circumstances have not allowed it to carry out a programme made for peace, and not for civil war.

I repeat—for it is necessary—that I am very well aware of the specious grounds on which those who choose to assail the Government, at a time like this, rest their disloyal behavior. They make the very plea the rebels made when they attempted to burn down the national temple—a violated Constitution. They are great sticklers for the letter of the Constitution. They remind one of the enemies of our Saviour, who were always flinging in his blessed face the authority of the Mosaic law. He could save no life on the Sabbath-day, because the Mosaic Constitution forbade it! He could pluck no corn for his starving disciples, because the Mosaic Constitution made no provision for that! He could protect and shelter no penitent sinner, because the Mosaic Constitution condemned her to be stoned to death! He could break no yoke of moral and spiritual ignorance any where, because the Mosaic Constitution was thus endangered! In short, the Pharisees and Scribes and learned and acute doctors of the law, blocked the just starting chariot-wheels of the Gospel at every foot of its progress, with some quotation or warning out of the Jewish Constitution! And what would the Saviour of the world have been able to accomplish, if he had not firmly and boldly taken the ground, "The letter killeth, the spirit maketh alive!" If the Constitution of this country were what the enemies of the Government make it out—the rebels' best argument, the slave's worst enemy; the soldier's greatest hindrance, the citizen's darkest foe,—if semi-rebels at home could justly find their chief arguments and protection in it, the sooner it were abandoned the better. But it is no such thing! The friends, the true friends of the Constitution, are those who love its spirit too well to

allow a few specks in its body to become the ruin of its soul. They treat it as a parent treats his child, who, to save his life, suffers the surgeon to cut off a gangrenous finger or toe. If the Constitution of the United States were designed or fitted to obstruct the progress of public enlightenment, national ethics, and Christian civilization, it would become the curse of the nation. There is not a national charter in all history that has ever been permitted to do this. And is the Constitution of a free, democratic nation to be more wooden and incapable of enlightened moral interpretation than the law of the British Crown, or the French or Prussian Empires? It is absurd on the face of it. Because some of our fathers believed in cruel punishments, in the selling of even white apprentices into Slavery, in national lotteries, and in other, now universally condemned immoralities, are we tied to their errors and blindness, by reverence for their services? Is the letter of the law to over-ride its spirit, and that, too, in dealing with rebels and traitors who are openly seeking to destroy our national existence? I yield to no man in reverence for law and order; nay, in respect, even, for the law's delays, and all the various checks and balances by which constitutional government is secured. I believe in the immense importance of the proper distribution and segregation of the legislative, judicial, administrative and executive functions of this Government. No man can tell me any thing I do not now feel of the value of method, order, precedent, rule, in political life! But there are times when all these things must be subordinated to the primal question of self-preservation. Has a nation less than the rights of an individual? May it not, must it not defend its own existence at all hazards? Can any laws, or charter, or constitution mean to rob it of the rights of self-preservation? Is the Constitution really violated when, under such a necessity, the powers of the President are stretched beyond the ordinary reach of his office? I say the Constitution is preserved, as a life is saved, by despising ordinary precautions and rules. The Spanish law forbids a subject from laying hands, on any pretence, on an Infanta of Spain, under penalty of instant death. Did, then, the peasant who rushed into the palace and extinguished the flames that enveloped a royal princess, deserve to die? Did he break the law? Yes, in the letter. No, in the spirit. And would he not have deserved to die a thousand deaths if he had regarded the letter of the law when his liege lady was in

instant peril of her life? Is such fictitious violations of the Constitution as this, that Northern sympathizers with the rebellion are now seeking to make grounds of accusation against the true friends of the Nation, and the protectors of its life—such violations as the incarceration of spies, of correspondents with the rebel government; inciters of revolt in border cities; editors of rebel newspapers under some thin disguise; insolent slave-drivers on the now free soil of the District of Columbia; of men seeking to sow divisions and disloyalty in the army itself; to prevent the raising of fresh levies; to weaken and bring into contempt the lawful power of the country. When it became necessary to reinforce Fort Taylor, a high military authority is said to have declared, that unless the act of *habeas corpus* were suspended in the section of the State where the fort now lies, every National soldier could be arrested by the rebels, under civil process, and the power of the National Government be put at absolute defiance. But it was by some thought unconstitutional to suspend this act. Then it must be unconstitutional to uphold the Constitution, to oppose secession, or to put down rebellion. Let it be deemed unconstitutional, then, by those who hate Union and liberty; it was none the less necessary—absolutely and unconditionally necessary—and the President, doubtless with some such view, signed the order for it with a full sense of his constitutional responsibility. But he is not yet justified in that act, or in any similar acts, by the opposition. Would God, would America, would the Future, should we, justify him, if, higgling on the point, he had sacrificed the national spirit, honor, life and hopes to the weak and empty scruples of others about the letter of the law? He would indeed have been a coward and a traitor to his country, if he had shrunk from that holy duty, of setting the law of national self-preservation above every other consideration, at that critical moment. Remember that the value of a living ruler is that he is alive, and can accommodate action to circumstances. We might as well have presiding over this nation a Maelzel automaton, or Babbage's Calculator, wound up by the Constitution to strike certain foregone conclusions, as to have a living representative of the people—a man whose heart, conscience and will have their legitimate place in interpreting and applying the written law to the nation's exigencies—if these feeble notions of the absolute preëminence in a civil war of every doubt or silence or uncertainty in a Constitution made for peace, are to prevail over the necessities of immediate and decisive action.

But, after all, no plea is so specious and so dangerous among all those under which disloyalty seeks to conceal its fangs, as that which attempts to distinguish between the Administration and the Government. It is perfectly respectful to the Government, for which it is ready to give life and treasure; but the Administration is imbecile, is false, is destroying the liberties of the nation; is without wisdom, or honesty, or success! It is to be assailed, despised, resisted, and in every way obstructed, and this is all in the way of sound citizenship and in the exercise of inalienable rights—in the character of true and loyal Americans! It is very like the plea of men who respect the marital relation, but have no allegiance to the wife of their bosom; or of those who advocate honesty as a general principle, but make an exception in dealing with their own creditors! Practically, everybody knows that the President is, for two years or more to come, the sole lawful head of this Nation, and his Cabinet, men of his own choice, the arbiters of our national fate. Practically, what these men do or fail to do, through our furtherance or hindrance, settles the fate of this people for a generation, perhaps for ages to come. Practically, their support, encouragement and invigoration, is *the only possible method* of putting forth our National strength and ability. Practically, to bring them into suspicion, contempt and distrust, is the greatest injury and peril our cause can suffer! Practically, the rebel Congress can have no allies more worthy encouragement and pecuniary support, than the men here who attempt to weaken the confidence of the nation in their sole executive representatives; to bring the high officers of the Government into disrespect and contempt; to make foreign Powers think us led by pigmies, governed by imbeciles, counseled by knaves, divided among ourselves, and on the verge of despair; our successes cheap, our prospects cloudy, our resources belittled, our zeal and determination dimmed and dwindled, our national will broken; our Government despised, sneered at and distrusted by its own children. Nor, alas! is this wretched policy wholly confined to traitors. Loyal and honest men, in the pride of opinion unwittingly perform the traitor's work. Faithless, impatient, superficial, mere partisans, or mere pettifoggers, or mere sectionalists, or mere mediocrities, they assail the Administration because the Administration does not take their advice, see things their way, jump to their conclusions, adopt their "isms," swallow their panacea, or force it down the throat of the country.

I was lately very much struck by the remark of an honest New England radical Abolitionist, who stated to me with an evident expectation that I should receive it as a proof of the President's total lack of intelligence, that a Committee of the leading representatives of his sect had just waited on the President, and had three hours of conversation with him; and that they had no evidence that they had produced the least effect on his mind! As they were all very excellent and eloquent gentlemen, of their school, I confess I felt a new increase of respect for the President's firmness and many-sided wisdom! I have too often had my own hasty views and wishes opposed and thwarted by the Administration and high officers, not to have learned that it does not prove them to be wrong that they do not uniformly agree with even their honest and earnest advisers! And, taking advantage of whatever name for frankness and simplicity, in speaking the unqualified convictions of my own mind, I may here enjoy, I solemnly declare in the interests of the nation and cause, that, with more than ordinary opportunities of seeing and practically co-working with the Government, every month of study of our Administration has given me a greater estimate of its integrity, ability and fitness to meet the crisis; a higher respect for the President; a deeper persuasion that faith and confidence in him would be repaid by full success in our cause. I believe that the very common opinion that intestine quarrels rend the Cabinet; that no harmony of views or purposes prevails; that the high officers distrust, and are jealous of each other; that they are chiefly animated by political ambition, or are sacrificing the country to their own self-seeking objects, is a most entire and a most pernicious mistake; that the differences among them are honest and healthy differences, not touching vital points, and that their perplexities spring not from their own divisions, but from ours; their lack of sharpness of policy to the blunted, because widely-extended, interests and wishes of a greatly scattered people. I believe no set of men ever lived, that were more idly, hastily and ignorantly judged and abused, than our existing Administration; that they need only to be closely and personally known to be wholly respected; and that any general disaffection or distrust is caused wholly by the poisonous malaria sent up from the marshes of public prejudice, from the foul-mouthed calumnies of a portion of the public press, or the idle gossip of thoughtless story-tellers. When I think of the extent to which the falsest calumnies can go, without one particle of

truth to travel on—things I personally know to be not only untrue, but the precise reverse of truth—I am in despair of correcting public prejudice. To take an illustration, below that of a Cabinet officer, whom I will not criticise—no man in the whole country, for instance, has suffered greater wrongs, from the causes alleged, than General McDowell—a wise and good man, a patriot and brave soldier, simply unfortunate, but despised and hated as a traitor and a drunkard by millions, many of whom are not worthy to loose his shoe-latchet. This man, who has been styled a drunkard, on the most incontestible evidence, by men and women of the highest character, in my presence, I positively know never so much as touches a drop of intoxicating drink—is a total abstinent, and always has been so! And I believe there are generals and Cabinet officers now under suspicion of drunkenness and opium-eating, and fraud and falsehood—on testimony that would hang a man in many courts—who are as innocent of each and every one of these charges as the purest man in this assembly.

It is a reckless way of discussing the personal character of public men, in the press and in popular assemblies, that has led to this atrocious depreciation of men, whose characters and reputation ought at this time to be under the shield of every patriotic citizen's allegiance and gratitude. I am persuaded that it is a sacred duty to urge this point everywhere; and I rejoice, that in the best faith in the world, I am able to begin a reform in this direction, at least in my own small sphere. I have from the beginning thought it my duty everywhere to support the Government and to support the Administration as the practical representative of the Government. I think it your duty, your religious duty—the duty of every loyal citizen, and that no duty is so urgent and imperative at this moment, as to restore a well-deserved confidence to our President and his advisers. If they did not merit it in their personal character and talents, I should still claim that they deserved it in their official position! But I verily believe they merit it in their own persons, and only the more where they do not represent the partisan wishes of those of us who elected them. They came in a party-administration. Civil war has converted them into National patriots. The lightning of God has touched them, and rendered them sacred. Yes! Can we measure their trials, anxieties and difficulties—the necessary sorrows and cares of their vast and complicated responsibility—and be willing to add to their burdens the needless grief of misinterpretation, slander, gossipping

criticism and personal abuse? A more ungrateful public was never known than that which could willingly assail the personal character of these slaves and conscripts of our public necessities—the present Government of the country! Let us reform our ways altogether; begin a new style of speech about our public men in office. Let us support, encourage, cheer and trust the Government. It is all they need to carry us triumphantly through.

Thus, brethren, do I commend to you the cause of unconditional loyalty. I have pleaded it as a son pleading for a parent's life! Would to God that none needed this earnest pleading more than you do. I know your hearts, and how warmly and cordially as a congregation you approve and practice upon these principles. I make you, then, the missionaries of them, wherever you go, and with whomsoever you are conversant. Let our women and children become the propagandists of unconditional loyalty. The country needs not only the fealty of her sons, but of her daughters also. Sing the songs of patriotic devotion at your hearthstones. Let your country have your earliest and your latest prayers. Frown on every syllable of distrust, of wavering, of disrespect, that pollutes the air you breathe. Require of all your friends to be first the friends of the nation! Have nobody's love that does not love the country more! Make a religion of patriotism. Let not the devotion of rebel fathers and mothers, of rebel sons and daughters, shame your lukewarmness, your selfishness, your coward fears. If error and treason can find such willing, uncomplaining martyrs and propagandists, what ought liberty, union, and lawful government to have? It is this holy spirit of devotion on the part of the whole people, this jealous patriotism, this unconditional loyalty that can alone save the land. Let it not be your fault if from this hour it does not prevail in every home, in every heart, in every place of business, in every church throughout this nation—struggling, as it is, for the most sacred and valuable rights of our common humanity, a lawful Government, and the right of Christianity and civilization to triumph over barbarism and Slavery.

Edward O. Jenkins, Printer and Stereotyper, 20 North William Street, New York.

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